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SENATE RESOLUTION 71--CONDEMNING THE GOVERNMENT OF IRAN FOR ITS STATE-  
SPONSORED PERSECUTION OF THE BAHA'I MINORITY IN IRAN AND ITS CONTINUED  
VIOLATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL COVENANTS ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. WYDEN (for himself, Mr. Menendez, Mr. Whitehouse, Ms. Snowe, and Mr. Brownback) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations:

S. Res. 71

Whereas, in 1982, 1984, 1988, 1990, 1992, 1994, 1996, 2000, 2006, and 2008, Congress declared that it deplored the religious persecution by the Government of Iran of the Baha'i community and would hold the Government of Iran responsible for upholding the rights of all Iranian nationals, including members of the Baha'i faith;

Whereas, in November 2007, the Iranian Ministry of Information in Shiraz jailed Baha'is Ms. Raha Sabet, age 33, Mr. Sasan Taqva, age 32, and Ms. Haleh Roohi, age 29, for educating underprivileged children and gave them 4-year prison terms, which they are serving;

Whereas Ms. Sabet, Mr. Taqva, and Ms. Rooshi were targeted solely on the basis of their religion;

Whereas, on January 23, 2008, the Department of State released a statement urging the Government of Iran to release all individuals held without due process and a fair trial, including the 3 young Baha'is being held in an Iranian Ministry of Intelligence detention center in Shiraz;

Whereas, in March and May of 2008, Iranian intelligence officials in Mashhad and Tehran arrested and imprisoned Mrs. Fariba Kamalabadi, Mr. Jamaloddin Khanjani, Mr. Afif Naeimi, Mr. Saeid Rezaie, Mr. Behrouz Tavakkoli, Mrs. Mahvash Sabet, and Mr. Vahid Tizfahm, the members of the coordinating group for the Baha'i community in Iran;

Whereas, on February 11, 2009, the deputy prosecutor in Tehran, Mr. Hassan Haddad, announced that those seven leaders will go on trial at a Revolutionary Court on charges of ``espionage for Israel, insulting religious sanctities and propaganda against the Islamic Republic'';

Whereas the lawyer for these seven leaders, Mrs. Shirin Ebadi, the Nobel Laureate, has been denied all access to the prisoners and their files;

Whereas these seven Baha'i leaders were targeted solely on the basis of their religion; and

Whereas the Government of Iran is party to the International Covenants on Human Rights: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate--

(1) condemns the Government of Iran for its state-sponsored persecution of the Baha'i minority in Iran and its continued violation of the International Covenants on Human Rights;

(2) calls on the Government of Iran to immediately release the seven leaders and all other prisoners held solely on account of their religion, including Mrs. Fariba Kamalabadi, Mr. Jamaloddin Khanjani, Mr. Afif Naeimi, Mr. Saeid Rezaie, Mr. Behrouz Tavakkoli, Mrs. Mahvash Sabet, Mr. Vahid Tizfahm, Ms. Raha Sabet, Mr. Sasan Taqva, and Ms. Haleh Roohi; and

(3) calls on the President and Secretary of State, in cooperation with the international community, to immediately condemn the Government of Iran's continued violation of human rights and demand the immediate release of prisoners held solely on account of their religion, including Mrs. Fariba Kamalabadi, Mr. Jamaloddin Khanjani, Mr. Afif Naeimi, Mr. Saeid Rezaie, Mr. Behrouz Tavakkoli, Mrs. Mahvash Sabet, Mr. Vahid Tizfahm, Ms. Raha Sabet, Mr. Sasan Taqva, and Ms. Haleh Roohi.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I rise today to speak in support of a resolution that I am offering with my colleagues, Senators Brownback, Menendez, Snowe, and Whitehouse. This resolution condemns the Iranian government's persecution of its own Baha'i community and urges the Obama administration to speak out strongly against this continued injustice.

The Baha'i Faith, the world's youngest independent monotheistic religion, was founded in Iran in 1844. Today, it is practiced by more than 5 million people across the planet, from Bangalore, India to Beaverton, Oregon. Roughly 300,000 of these adherents still live in Iran. Although Baha'i teachings emphasize equality, unity, and peace, Iranian authorities have viewed the religion as an apostasy and have treated it as a threat since the beginning.

The current Islamic Republic has been particularly hostile to Baha'i practitioners since its establishment in 1979. In 1983, Iran's government formally banned all Baha'i religious institutions and criminalized membership in them and service to them. The regime has officially recognized Christians, Jews, and Zoroastrians as religious minorities. It refuses to extend this same status to the Baha'is, even though they make up Iran's largest religious minority. According to the State Department's 2008 International Religious Freedom Report, the regime continues to create "a threatening atmosphere for nearly all non-Shi'a religious groups, most notably for Baha'is." The government routinely seizes personal property from members of the Baha'i community, denies access to education and employment opportunities, and detains Baha'is based solely on their religious beliefs.

Last year, the Iranian regime imprisoned seven leaders of the Baha'i community. In February 2009, Tehran's deputy prosecutor announced that these seven leaders would be tried on charges of "espionage for Israel, insulting religious sanctities, and propaganda against the Islamic Republic." Not surprisingly, the regime provided no evidence to support these preposterous accusations and has refused to allow a lawyer for the seven to even meet with them. These actions are clear and unambiguous violations of Iran's international commitments under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Some in the international community have already condemned this mockery of justice, and rightly so. My colleagues and I believe the time has now come to add the United States Senate to this growing chorus of voices.

Our resolution is simple and straightforward. It denounces the

Iranian government's persecution of the Baha'is and calls on the regime to immediately release all prisoners held for their religious beliefs, including the seven Baha'i leaders. It further calls on President Barack Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to work with the international community in condemning the Iranian regime for its repeated human rights violations.

I hope that colleagues will join me and Senators Brownback, Menendez, Snowe, and Whitehouse in supporting this commonsense resolution.